

null
Diana T Fritz 03/21/2007 05:32:47 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

Cable
Text:

UNCLASSIFIED

SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

June 22, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 2969 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: ELAB, PREL, PHUM, PGOV, SOCI, CVIS
Captions: None
Subject: UAE AMNESTY FAILS
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 02969

SIPDIS
Laser1:
INFO: FCS
CXABU:
ACTION: ECON
INFO: P/M AMB DCM POL

DISSEMINATION: ECON
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: A/DCM: TEWILLIAMS
DRAFTED: ECON: GARANA
CLEARED: ECON: CCRUMPLER

VZCZCADI051
RR RUEHC RUCPDOE RUEHDM RUEHTU
DE RUEHAD #2969 1731243
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 221243Z JUN 03
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0539
INFO RUCPDOE/USDOE WASHDC
RUEHDM/GCC COLLECTIVE
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 0531

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 002969

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, DRL AND EB/CBA
AMEMBASSY TUNIS HOLD FOR FSI: OLIVER JOHN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [CVIS](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAE AMNESTY FAILS

REF: A) ABU DHABI 2175 AND PREVIOUS

B) ABU DHABI 945

11. (SBU) Summary: The UAEG's amnesty program failed to significantly reduce the number of illegal laborers in the UAE. Only 60,000 illegals have left the country, far less than the hoped for 250,000-300,000. Though the amnesty may continue on indefinitely, it failed because illegal workers do not believe the UAEG will crack down on them nor do they fear the repercussions

of getting caught. There is little actual difference for illegals between taking advantage of the amnesty and being captured by the police: detention, deportation, and a ban on returning to the UAE to work. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The UAE Labor Ministry implemented the current amnesty to establish better control over the UAE labor market by removing illegal workers (see ref A). When the amnesty began, UAE officials hoped that 250,000-300,000 illegal expatriates would leave as they did during the first amnesty in 1996. However, as of the middle of June, only 85,000 workers had applied for the amnesty and approximately 60,000 had departed. In conversations with the various foreign labor attaches in Abu Dhabi, Econoff learned that 25,000 Indians, 12,500 Pakistanis, 15,000 Bangladeshis, 3,600 Sri Lankans, and 4,000 Filipinos took advantage of the amnesty.

¶3. (SBU) The labor attaches maintain there are three types of illegal laborers in the UAE: those who enter the country illegally, those who overstay a valid tourist visa, and those who overstay a valid work visa. The Pakistani attache told Econoff that the first category consists primarily of Pakistanis who obtain a visa to enter Iran, ferry over to Oman, and then cross the border into the UAE. The Indian and Filipino diplomats contend that their nationals are more likely to fall into the latter two categories and overstay valid visas.

¶4. (SBU) The UAEG originally designated the amnesty to run from January 1, 2003, to April 30, 2003, but it has been extended twice -- once officially and once unofficially. After the initial period ended, the UAEG officially extended the amnesty to May 31, but has continued to process applications without any formal proclamation. Some of the labor attaches believe the amnesty will continue indefinitely (and unofficially) until the UAEG can save face and announce a significant tally such as 100,000. Other observers contend that the amnesty will end in June because the entire UAEG will be on vacation in July and August.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The amnesty failed because workers do not believe the UAEG will crack down on illegal labor after the amnesty ends, nor are there any repercussions for getting caught. Workers prefer taking their chances and continuing to earn money. The 1996 amnesty was successful primarily because illegals believed the UAEG would strictly enforce the law once the program ended. Illegal laborers now view official threats as empty because the UAEG failed to follow through with any significant action after the original amnesty ended. Furthermore, there are no repercussions for getting caught as an illegal laborer. Workers do not pay fines -- most would not have the money to pay penalties -- but are simply deported to their home country. In Abu Dhabi Emirate, the government even pays for a ticket home. Illegals also are aware that jail space in the UAE is limited -- if prisons fill up, the UAEG will stop conducting sweeps. After two amnesties, but a continuing rise in the population of illegal laborers, the UAEG must accept a difficult truth: true reform of the labor market will require taking a harder line on illegal overstays, including the UAE nationals who profit immensely by brokering expatriate visas for non-existent jobs (see ref B). End comment.

Wahba